

DRAMA DOLLS

Jason Tanamor

“Drama is life with the dull bits cut out.” - Alfred Hitchcock

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Drama Dolls

A novel by Jason Tanamor

ALSO BY JASON TANAMOR

Adult/Literary:

Anonymous

Humor:

Hello Fabulous!

Hello Lesbian!

Young Adult:

The Extraordinary Life of Shady Gray

“Tanamor writes like a deformed love child of Chuck Palahniuk and Charles Bukowski who has finally discovered its own voice...” – Publishers Weekly

Sunday:

JUMPING IN A CIRCLE NEARLY caused her ankle to turn. Heel slipping off the bed, her thigh flexing to maintain position, Brittney's body leaned forward to avoid falling onto the floor. Standing upright helped prevent the near drop off the king sized bed. It was a balancing act.

Avoiding the fall, the jumping commenced.

In the air, the duo aimed higher and higher with every leap. Their knees bending to ensure maximum height. Calves flexing for greater power. Spinning round and round, Brittney's hands locked onto Barb's wrists.

A frozen expression on Barb's face, her eyes big and round. Her skin the color of peach. Makeup immaculate. Perfume was sprayed all over. Apricot and ginger in the air; it was a citrus aroma.

Their heads were so close to the ceiling they could see spider webs. There was paint in and out of a straight

line where the wall met the ceiling. White spots along the border. At that height, Brittney could see the trim needed an extra coat.

The room below was a disaster area.

Pained from continual bouncing, the paleness of Brittney's ankle turned to purple. The spinning became tougher, stiffer, with every jump. Her foot had gradually wound itself into the blankets. Twisted into a knot, the fabric suffocated her leg, a temporary relief for the discomfort that was swelling before her.

The knot forced Brittney and Barb to stop and untangle.

Hiking up her knee until her foot dislodged from the comforter, Brittney's heartbeat decreased.

The momentum was disrupted.

Jumping on a bed didn't seem nearly as fun as it had when Brittney and Barb had first entered the home. The up and down motion died to a complete halt. The springs in the mattress rebounded. The two bed jumpers stopped all action.

Play time was over. Now, they had to work. Then they had to escape.

Butted up against the wall was a vanity. The reflection in the vanity mirror summed up the prior evening's agenda. The plan that had been schemed up at

Brittney's house once again became a reality. Drawers were pulled halfway out, clothes dumped onto the floor. Some articles hanging by their sleeves, stretched from the drawer knob to the wood surface.

Their own reflections, the veracity was staring them in the face.

Picture frames were tilted over. Stock photos from retail stores showed prices and smiling couples, all in black and white. None of the frames were personalized. In the mix, there were different sized frames - 5X7, 8X10, 4X6 – with similar designs. You could tell they were bought in a pack.

The room's plants were dying from lack of water. Leaves crumbling to the floor, the dead ones were a yellowish brown. The plant's soil was dry like dirt. Plant soil dried on the inside of the pots.

A near-full bottle of antidepressants sat alone on an end table, the child safety cap still intact. Information sticker peeled off around the top. The bottom was partially showing – the medication's refill amount and prescription number.

On the dresser was a dust blanket with a clear spot in the middle that was the shape of a television base. The television had been elbowed to the floor. Surrounding the spot were candelabras with unused candles. Perfectly

cylindrical without a hint of melted wax.

The DVD player shoved back into the paint made a dimple in the drywall. Movies in and out of cases splayed like a deck of cards. Romantic comedies. Dramas. Old Bing Crosby movies, black and white; the classics. Widescreen special editions, remastered for maximum viewing. Musicals lined up together, tipping over and sliding down to the surface.

Murder mystery novels stacked as high as a shoe box. Many of the paperbacks with bookmarks in random pages. Romance fiction alphabetized by last name. There were soft-core female porn books. The pages worn and curled at the ends. The cover designs were all the same sequence involving a muscular Adonis with long, flowing hair.

Looking in the mirror, Brittney caught Barb's reflection. She looked like a child trick-or-treating. Holding her bag up for goodies. Standing in the center of the mess, searching for something else to grab. Kneeling down to pick up a watch, Barb kicked away some socks hoping to uncover more treasure. Only seeing wood floor, the burglar dropped the watch in the bag.

Toed out from under the bed, a Pink Lady Fleshlight with its cap missing rolled up next to a reserve of porno flicks. In the stash were unconventional, classic

movies such as *Alice in Wonderland*, *Anna Obsessed*, *Behind the Green Door*, and *China Sisters*.

The sex toy's rubber vagina, it was torn at the lips and scuffed. The bottom part of the labia sticking together. There were fingerprints running up and down the black, dirty handle. The smell of dried milky rubber filtered into the warm air.

Watching the scene unfolding through the mirror made Brittney nauseous. Trying to read the book titles made her dizzy. She began to get lightheaded. The little voice inside, soft and baritone, it was supposed to steer Brittney in the right direction. It was supposed to watch over her. Prevent her from making life mistakes. Instead, the voice, it was rooting Brittney on.

The pillowcases filled to the brim; their tops were crimped closed. Sagging at the bottom, the weight was getting heavier and heavier. Indents at the bottom of the sacks, some round; others pointed. The objects that had sharp edges made black creases on the outer fabric of the pillowcases.

A wooden wardrobe tipped over, petite sized shirts half hanging out, the rest of the garments were scattered on the floor. There were hair ties behind the cabinet; dust bunnies in bunches. Used condom wrappers that had fallen down to the hardwood. The bedroom had

dirt and paint chips peppered along the room's perimeter. Dead spiders on their backs, their legs were a cocoon around their bodies. Flies trapped in corner webs. You could tell the room hadn't been cleaned in a while.

A maze of unwanted costume jewelry with no clear paths surrounded the bed. The lamp falling off an end table, hanging from its cord, it was a bungee jumper off a bridge waiting to be retrieved. The shade was rolling back and forth in a circle.

Getting away from the mirror, Brittney's vision refocused.

In the closet was a thick cardboard box the shape of a rectangle. Taped to the top of the box was an empty plastic sleeve used to hold packing slips. *A flat screen television box? A body pillow?* Moving toward the object, the price tag of \$4,999 jumped out at Brittney. She opened the box to find nothing but packing material. A plastic bubble as long as the container. Shrink wrapped items tucked underneath. A cotton bag, a wig, and scented powder. The clean whiteness under her gloves showed dirty fingerprints.

Crouching over the fallen cabinet, searching for missed valuables, Barb said, "What do you got there?" As she inquired, she began pulling out pieces from the wardrobe. Rolled socks and stockings in her hand. Dropping them as she looked at her partner.

Stepping out of the closet, empty handed, Brittney shrugged. “No idea.” Wiping off her fingertips on a shirt on the floor, shaking her head, she said, “I have no fucking clue.”

An untouched display hand on the vanity, made from black velour with a styrofoam base, the annular, or third finger, was covered with a single diamond ring. The rest of the hand bare, the display hand’s wrist was mutant long, nearly a foot in inches, to accommodate bracelets. The 18k yellow gold, round solitaire in a cathedral setting caught Brittney’s attention. Reaching for it, she flinched when something crept up behind her.

Headlights shined through the room. The criminals stopped in mid-action, looked out over the yard, through the tree branches. The leaves made it problematic to see. Their shadows moving across the walls and onto the ceiling as the passing car receded down the block. The way the lights entered the house made for an uneventful light show.

Their burglary target was off a public drive with a handful of houses. Bus stop signs were on each corner. Benches by the signs surrounded by half-filled soda cups from fast food joints across town. An outline of a Colonel. Golden arches. Plain white cups from convenience stores. People walking dogs forced to stop as Tiger the collie or

Bailey the beagle sipped flat black cola.

The neighborhood was rebuilding. Some houses chipped with paint, others spoiled with Superman yellow or a fresh gray coat with burgundy trim. There was a rental property with multiple cars in the drive. Hanging up outside the unit, there were tin mailboxes in a row counting up to four. The reflective numbers peeling at the edges. Basketballs were on the lawn. One flat, its shape like a bicycle helmet.

Other dwellings, single-family homes with Big Wheels and bicycles on the porch. Hammocks and rocking chairs, a hit during this time of the year. Shade perennials in pots lined up in a row. Mats that read WELCOME were crookedly positioned on the porches.

Wind chimes hanging from porch ceiling hooks, ringing as the breeze brushed through them.

The car light's glow dissipating, Brittney's attention turned to Barb, who was now stepping over the closet to un-trap herself. Footprints made from clean, white cheerleader shoes were stamped into lingerie, evening gowns, and lacy stockings.

Barb's pillowcase was thrown over her shoulder. Bags in her grasp, her pom-poms stuffed into her Spankies. Rubber bracelets around each wrist spread positive words. BELIEVE. BE CONFIDENT.

Hands filled with goodies, Barb was a successful trick or treater, hauling away the most treats.

Her hair made from Saran and Kanekalon, Barb looked flawless. Of all the choices, she'd settled on a mixed hairstyle of artificial fibers. The Midwest weather required the Drama Dolls to combat the sunlight and humidity while resisting the heat so that their hairdos would remain in place. For the most part, their hair stayed styled.

Heavier in material, Saran repelled damage.

Softer to style, Kanekalon fought temperature.

Mid-summer brought insects and humidity. The season also saw children at soccer practice until the sun set. Parents chatting after practice. They were setting up play dates and book clubs. Adolescents running rampant from the extra time off school. Running around until the street lights illuminated the roads. Residents mowing their lawns last minute as the darkness approached.

Brittney's inner voice, it was bitter toward the residents whose lives were fulfilled. Whose lives were happy. Possibly the reason it wasn't deterring the burglary addiction.

The longer days meant late-night break-ins; often times the dates on the calendar changed. Burglaries into the early hours. Waiting for the final light on the block to

go black. Sorting goods until the sun came up.

Staring at Barb, Brittney stood statue-still. Her plastic face lifted from the wide smile stretched across the mask. Her phony eyes were fully expanded.

“What?” Barb said unfazed, her red cherry lipstick, thicker than the border’s paint. The black dot in the center of her pearl colored mouth was minuscule. Her mannered mouth, unmoved. The mask made the words muffled at times. Talking with your lips rubbing plastic, it was a challenge. She said, “What’re you looking at?”

Taken aback, emotions running high, the voice inside an innocent schoolgirl, Brittney said, “You look beautiful. Totally beautiful.”

Cheeks stained pink, her eyebrows the shape of moons, Barb’s bulged eyes displayed no emotion. The false eyelashes fanned outward. They were evenly spread out.

The Doll’s hair fell down the sides of her thermoplastic polymer face. Brushed straight but slowly expanding from the humidity coming from the open windows.

Eye holes the size of an infant child’s coat button made the housebreaks difficult. Talking through a plastic mouth that didn’t move made for miscommunication. The fake breasts mounted on their chests, they made for impure thoughts. Constructed from cardboard, each breast

was shaped like a computer mouse. Now and then, the staple poked their skin, the clear tape scratching their chests. The Dolls’ “boobs” were snug and tight from the bras that they wore. Safe and sound under the tight turtleneck cheerleader sweaters.

The minor annoyances, though, were worth the price to be seamless. They were worth the price to be cheerleaders. Worth the price to be Drama Dolls.

Reaching out, Barb Doll flipped the loose strands of hair away from Brittney’s face. Breathing heavier, through the mask, she said, “You’re totally beautiful.” An awkward stare, she moved in toward Brittney, their open mouths touching. Their bodies rubbing, the sharp cardboard edges of Brittney’s breasts scratched her chest. She could feel a staple twisting. It was poking her nipple.

The voice inside, it was hooting and hollering.

Pulling back, Brittney said, “Totally!” Underneath the plastic, her real smile was wide. Wider than the manufactured mouth on the mask. All things considered, Brittney’s life was currently happy. It was content.

“Ready?” Barb said.

“Ready.”

Barb, flicking her head toward the bedroom door, said, “Let’s move.”

Running out of the house, breaking toward the

darkness down the street, Barb slung around a pillowcase and hiked up her mini-skirt.

Her legs were toned and tanned, thigh muscles working on each step. Her calves flexed into the shape of biscuits when each foot hit the pavement. Running with bags of loot made for complete awkwardness in her stride.

Looped around her wrists, the remaining bags rammed into Barb's legs, bruising spots that would later turn yellow. The pom-poms' handles poked her belly, the plastic feathers tickling her upper thighs.

Passing through a used car lot, the Kia models and Hondas lined up in a row. A pair of minivans with slashed prices parked side by side. The scrolling marquee of a sign read NO CAR OVER \$6,995. Financing was available with approved credit. The marquee, it read the days and hours of operation.

Catching her reflection in each car window she passed, Brittney stopped periodically to stare. Her transparent image doubled in with each automobile's interior.

Slowing to a walk, Brittney spotted a vintage Corvette in the corner of the lot. It had a sign that read PRICE BREAK. Looking through the reflection, into the custom bucket seats, Brittney imagined cruising around town in flair. Turning heads, people pointing as the car

rolled by.

The voice, it was screaming, “Buy it!”

Barb, gaining distance, turned around and jogged backward. She said, “C’mon!”

Catching one last glimpse at coolness, Brittney Doll picked up the pace and rejoined her fellow cheerleader.

The plastic Dolls passed a law office on the corner of an intersection; the sign on the building was for customers only. The red brick building stood out amongst the old fashioned neighborhood they were running through.

Once they got back onto the street, the Drama Dolls sprinted toward freedom.

The more pressure on her ankle, the more Brittney began to limp. She was running with the bulk of the weight to one side. Losing pace, slowing down to a gallop.

“OK?”

Shifting the possessions to her weak side to even out the weight, Brittney nodded. Looking back toward the house, through the little black squares for windows, the aftermath shined periodically as cars drove past. A rolling shadow on the ceiling the shape of a hand, one finger thicker below the knuckle.

Continuing down the street, weaving in and out of yard bushes, ducking at cars that passed by, the fleeing burglars managed the escape as planned. Walking farther away from civilization, through a wooded area, the stream water dripping on the rocks, the Drama Dolls had struck again.

The leaves rustled under their feet as the two trudged down the path that separated hills and water. Bags slung around their shoulders, Brittney and Barb slowly caught their breaths.

Far enough out, past the woods and multi-lane street that connected the neighborhood and downtown area, the pair ducked into an alley and removed their plastic masks. Breaths exhaled, the night's heat causing them to sweat. A stench of rotten food and stale urine punched them in the face.

Brittney and Barb looked at each other and cringed.

The alley served as a dumpster spot for various restaurants. Sesame chicken leftovers in one dumpster. Mixed in were peanuts and chili peppers from discarded Kung Pao splattered over rice. The smell of soy sauce lingering.

Fried chicken dumped out in another. Bones with skin and fat rolled into napkins. Cardboard buckets with

grease spots on the bottom were tossed in as well. Layered in on top of the chicken were refried beans from the taco joint next door. Thrown out ground taco beef, shreds of lettuce, and diced tomatoes splashed on the inside of the bins. Stale taco shells broken into pieces peppered over the pounds of wasted food. The aroma emanating from the dumpster was a smorgasbord.

A couple of Chinese cooks were standing around a dumpster smoking cigarettes. Speaking in their native language, the two were laughing as they inhaled their smokes. “Yào hē zuì jīn wǎn (Going to get drunk tonight),” one cook said to the other. He inhaled his smoke, and then exhaled a couple of charcoal gray colored donuts into the air.

The other cook, spitting into the pavement, said, “Bù, yào ná qǐ háizi (Nah, have to pick up the kid).”

The drinking cook, hoping to get an entire twelve pack into his system before night’s end, said, “Tài zāogāole, yěxǔ míngtiān (Too bad, maybe tomorrow).”

The child touting cook, he smiled, nodded his head, and then flicked his cigarette butt into the distance. Waiting for his co-worker to finish his smoke, he kicked a couple rocks away from him. Once his friend was finished, the two Chinese men entered the back door of the restaurant, disappearing from view.

Excess hamburgers were piled to the top of the remaining garbage can. The bums were stocking up for the week. Mice scurried from under the dumpsters. Birds were drinking from puddles formed by water dumped out from kitchens. There was piss splattered where the buildings met the pavement.

Swallowing hard, Brittney said, “Yuck!”

“Totally,” Barb said. A bird flew by with half a bun in its beak. It dropped a crumb that landed on Barb. “Not cool!” she said, wiggling her arm. The piece of food fell down to the pavement. A mouse ran up to the bread and snatched it, running away before Barb could know what happened.

The heist had gone well, a treasure of materialistic belongings for their stash.

“Drama Dolls Strike Again!” the inner voice of conquering reason said.

Barb locked gaze with Brittney, their hearts beating heavy. Gasping for air, they nodded, the Dolls’ real lips building to smiles. Masks on top of their heads, the plastic faces crumpled, looking up to the stars. Empty eye holes stared into nothing.

“Great work, Barb.”

“You too, Brittney.”

Crumbling gravel in the distance startled them.

Nodding their heads sharply down, each mask slipped to the respective cheerleader's chin. The getaway car, a black Buick LeSabre boat, crept around the corner, its headlights turned off. It was purring through the night. The large body fit just enough in the alley for the car's doors to open.

In the backseat were bags filled with necklaces, bracelets, loop earrings, and stud earrings. The bags had tiaras, rings, and chokers. A Pearl Drop Tattoo choker was sticking out of the top of one bag. The bits of jewelry, they were the lifted contents the cheerleader Dolls had to sort through later. Prior heists that also went as planned.

Slouching against the door in the backseat was a passed out Drama Doll. Her body, it was limp and hunched down. Her head fallen into the window. Uniform wrinkled, the shirt was scrunched up halfway over her torso so you could see her navel ring. Shaven legs from the knees down; blade cuts were a music staff without notes. Thighs were a smooth satin. The doll wore spotless white shoes. Her right one untied.

The passenger side door swung open. Leaning over into the front passenger seat, Lena screamed, "Get in!" The Doors played softly out of the speakers. Melancholy keyboards complementing the guitar riffs.

Masks positioned, Brittney and Barb tossed the

loot into the car. Sliding up against the bags in the backseat, Barb made herself as comfortable as she could. Squeezing in pushed the passed-out Drama Doll's head farther into the window. The mask was looking ghostly through the glass. Staring out toward the direction of the heist, Barb said, "Let's go?"

Birds flew off with hamburger buns. Soaring in front of the car, through the windshield, the cheerleaders could see bread crumbs dropping onto the street. A homeless man digging into a dumpster pulled out a chicken leg. Biting into the meat, his teeth pulled the skin from the bone. The vagrant swallowed his score and then scooped out taco meat with his hand, throwing the chunks into his mouth simultaneously with the dark meat.

Brittney and Lena looked at each other and winced. "Gross," Lena said.

Her own plastic mask over her head, hair pulled back in a ponytail, Lena shifted into drive. Hands were covered in gloves around the steering wheel. On her feet were white cheerleader shoes. Her mini-skirt layered over a pair of runny pantyhose. Lena looked exactly like them – totally beautiful.

Observing the passed out, dolled up freak show, Barb said, "What's with her?" Brittney stayed quiet. Although Lena stayed silent as well, she made a point to

stare at Barb through the rearview. The silence in between the music urged Barb to repeat herself. “What’s with her?” she said, this time louder.

Speeding away, Lena remained quiet. Jim Morrison singing “Light My Fire.” Lena lip syncing Morrison through her mask. Her plastic lips rolling up and down to the words.

“Tired... she’s just tired,” Brittney said. Looking over at Lena, the air thickening from the discomfort, Brittney quickly changed the subject. Her thumb pointing over the seat, she said, “This is Barb. Barb, this is Lena.” Rubbing her ankle with her hand, the heat from the friction started to burn Brittney’s leg.

“Yea, we’ve meh—”

Clearing her throat, Lena cut Barb off. She craned her neck back and gave Barb a sharp, dirty look.

Outside the back car window, the alley was shrinking to the size of a faraway train tunnel. Eying Barb, the darkness hiding her gaze, Lena said, “Hi. Nice to meet you.”

Gazing out the window, avoiding Lena’s stare, Barb slid down in her seat. “A pleasure.”

Of course, Barb’s real name was William.

And Brittney’s was Jeffrey.